

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 07671 01 OF 02 271405Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SSM-03 IO-13 AID-05 NEAE-00 /091 W

----- 016200

P R 271042Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1880

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 7671

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LE, US

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN LEBANON

1. SUMMARY. ON SEPT. 23, ELIAY SARKIS ASSUMED OFFICE AS PRESIDENT OF LEBANON, A COUNTRY IN RUINS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS SOME ASSETS THAT MAY ENABLE HIM TO PATCH TOGETHER A TEMPORARY TRUCE, A PERMANENT SOLUTION WILL DEPEND VERY HEAVILY ON DECISIONS MADE OUTSIDE

LEBANON. SARKIS AND OTHER LEBANESE MAY NOW BE LMOKING TO UNITED STATES FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. ELIAS SARKIS, WHO WAS SWORN IN AS NEW PRESIDENT OF LEBANON ON SEPT 23, HAS INHERITED A COUNTRY IN RUINS; THE CARNAGE AND DESTRUCTION THAT HAVE OCCURRED  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 07671 01 OF 02 271405Z

IN THIS LITTLE COUNTRY IN LAST 18 MONTHS ARE ALMOST

UNBELIEVABLE. LEBANON'S POPULATION IN 1973 WAS ESTIMATED ABOUT THREE MILLION; TODAY IT IS PROBABLY ABOUT TWO MILLION, INCLUDING ALMOST HALF A MILLION PALESTINIANS. USUAL FIGURE FOR CASUALTIES DURING PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS, INCLUDING CIVILIANS ON BOTH SIDES, IS ABOUT 40,000 KILLED AND 200,000 WOUNDED. TRANSPOSING THESE FIGURES TO U.S. WOULD MEAN THREE MILLION KILLED AND FIFTEEN MILLION WOUNDED. (TOTAL KILLED IN ALL U.S. WARS IS JUST OVER ONE MILLION.) EVEN ALLOWING FOR EXAGGERATION, SLAUGHTER IN LEBANON HAS BEEN HORRENDOUS.

3. MATERIAL DESTRUCTION HAS BEEN ALMOST AS BAD. AWTROUGH ACCURATE ESTIMATES ARE IMPOSSIBLE, IT WILL CERTAINLY COST LITERALLY BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO REBUILD LEBANON. BEIRUT IS A SHAMBLES AND TRIPOLI IS PROBABLY WORSE. DWELLINGS OF ALMOST EVERY LEBANESE FAMILY HAVE SUFFERED FROM ARTILLERY AND MORTAR FIRE, ROADS HAVE BEEN MINED AND DESTROYED, ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM SEVERELY DAMAGED--LIST IS ALMOST ENDLESS. WHAT CHANCE DOES SARKIS HAVE OF ENDING THIS TRAGEDY AND REBUILDING HIS COUNTRY?

4. SARKIS BEGINS HIS TERM OF OFFICE WITH A NUMBER OF ASSETS:

(A) IRONICALLY, TERRIBLE HUMAN AND MATERIAL DESTRUCTION MAY OFFER SARKIS ONE OF HIS BEST HOPES. MANY LEBANESE POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE SAID PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES ARE TIRED OF WAR AND LOOKING DESPERATELY FOR END TO KILLING AND DESTRUCTION. SEPT 23, ONLY FIXED DATE ON LEBANESE POLITICAL CALENDER, OFFERS POLITICIANS ON BOTH SIDES OPPORTUNITY TO COMPROMISE "AS A GESTURE OF SUPPORT TO PRESIDENT SARKIS" WITHOUT APPEARING TO GIVE IN TO THEIR OPPONENTS.

(B) SARKIS AS AN INDIVIDUAL BRINGS CERTAIN POSITIVE QUALITIES TO HIS NEW POSITION; HE IS BY ALL ACCOUNTS A CAUTIOUS MAN, A GOOD LISTENER, ONE WHO STUDIES A PROBLEM CAREFULLY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION. SINCE HIS ELECTION IN MAY, HE HAS KEPT HIMSELF CAREFULLY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 07671 01 OF 02 271405Z

NEUTRAL, ABOVE THE BATTLE, AND HAS AVOIDED ANTAGONIZING ANY OF THE MAJOR PARTICIPANTS. AS THE LEGAL PRESIDENT, HE WILL AUTOMATICALLY HAVE THE SUPPORT OF MANY CHRISTIANS FOR WHOM THE MARONITE PRESIDENCY IS THEIR POLITICAL ANCHOR; TO THE MOSLEM LEFT HE IS AT LEAST ACCEPTABLE. EVEN THE PALESTINIANS HAVE WELCOMED HIS INAUGURATION.

(C) THE WARRING PARTIES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE WAR ARE SPLIT; THEY ARE NOT COHESIVE GROUPS BUT LOOSE COALITIONS, SUBJECT TO INTERNAL STRAINS. ON CHRISTIAN SIDE, THERE HAVE BEEN REPEATED SKIRMISHES BETWEEN ELEMENTS OF KATAEB (PHALANGE) PARTY AND CHAMOUN'S PNL, AND BETWEEN CHRISTIAN TOWNS LIKE BESHARRE AND ZOGHORTA IN THE NORTH. ON THE LEFT, PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES ARE DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL FACTIONS, SEVERAL PALESTINIAN LEADERS ARE UNHAPPY WITH THEIR ALLIANCE WITH JUNBLATT, AND MANY LEBANESE, INCLUDING THE SUNNIS WHO HAVE BEEN THE BACKBONE OF LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS CAUSE, ARE SHOWING SIGNS OF WILLINGNESS TO SHIFT THEIR ALLEGIANCE. IN THE MIDDLE, TRADITIONAL LEADERS LIKE KARAME, SALAM AND EBDE, WHO REPRESENT LITTLE EXCEPT THEMSELVES, ARE PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN A COMPROMISE THAT WOULD RESTORE TO THEM SOME POWER AND PRESTIGE. SARKIS HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FLUID SITUATION.

(D) FINALLY, SARKIS APPEARS TO HAVE FOR THE MOMENT THE BACKING OF KEY ARAB COUNTRIES. LEADING BEIRUT ARABIC DAILY "AN-NAHAR" PUBLISHED SEPT 23 LONG INTERVIEW WITH SADAT IN WHICH HE STRONGLY BACKED SARKIS AND OFFERED HIM ALL TYPES OF ASSISTANCE (EXCEPT TROOPS). SYRIA HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED SARKIS, SINCE ORCHESTRATING HIS ELECTION IN MAY, AND HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO HOLD OFF AT LEAST TEMPORARILY ON ANY FURTHER MILITARY ACTION IN LEBANON TO GIVE SARKIS SOME TIME TO TRY TO WORK OUT BEGINNINGS OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION. IF SARKIS CAN FIND A WAY, PERHAPS WITH HELP OF SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT, TO GET SYRIA AND EGYPT TO WORK TOGETHER IN LEBANON, HE MAY BE ABLE TO REDUCE HIS PROBLEM TO MANAGEABLE SIZE.  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 07671 01 OF 02 271405Z

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 07671 02 OF 02 271424Z

43  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SSM-03 IO-13 AID-05 NEAE-00 /091 W

----- 016423

P R 284042Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1881

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 7671

5. ON OTHER HAND, SARKIS FACES SOME IMPRESSIVE  
OBSTACLES.

(A) SYRIAN SUPPORT IS A MIXED BLESSING SINCE SARKIS  
MUST CONVINCE SUCH "INDEPENDENTS" AS KARAME, SALAM  
AND EDBE, AS WELL AS LEBANESE LEFT, THAT HE HAS THE  
WILL AND THE SKILL TO USE THE SYRIANS AND NOT VICE  
VERSA. FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE CONTINUING REPORTS  
SYRIA HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO CHAMOUN TO TAKE SOME  
MILITARY ACTION IF PALESTINIANS DO NOT WITHDRAW  
FROM METN SOON. UNLESS SARKIS CAN CONVINCE ASAD  
VERY QUICKLY THAT HE CAN ARRANGE A POLITICAL SOLUTION  
TO SYRIA'S LIKING, HIS HAND MAY BE FORCED.

(B) BASIC ATTITUDES OF THE TWO MAJOR OPPONENTS--  
MARONITES AND PALESTINIANS--HAVE NOT CHANGED, AND  
NEITHER SEEMS READY TO GIVE UP, DESPITE THE SLAUGHTER.  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 07671 02 OF 02 271424Z

CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS, LED BY CHAMOUN, APPEAR TO  
BELIEVE THEY WILL NEVER HAVE A BETTER CHANCE THAN  
NOW--WHILE THEY ARE FULLY MOBILIZED, REASONABLY  
WELL TRAINED AND ARMED, AND SUPPORTED BY SYRIANS--  
TO DEAL PALESTINIANS A CRUSHING BLOW, FORCE THEM  
BACK INTO CAMPS WITH ONLY LIGHT WEAPONS, AND REIMPOSE  
THEIR WILL ON ALL OF LEBANON. PALESTPNIANS HAVE BEEN  
BADLY HURT MILITARILY IN LAST THREE MONTHS, BUT THEY  
ARE NOT YET PREPARED TO ACCEPT THESE TERMS.

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE GROWING INDICATIONS THAT SOME MODERATE PALESTINIAN GROUPS ARE WILLING TO AGREE TO A TRUCE OFFERING SOME CONCESSIONS TO SYRIA AND THE CHRISTIANS, MANY TOUGH PROBLEMS, SUCH AS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "CAIRO ACCORDS," REMAIN TO BE DEALT WITH. THE CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS DO NOT TRUST SARKIS BECAUSE THEY KNOW HE IS NOT ONE OF THEM, AND THEY WILL NOT FOLLOW HIM IF THEY DECIDE HE IS PURSUING A POLICY THAT IS AGAINST THEIR INTERESTS. YET HE MUST INITIATE SUCH A POLICY IF HE IS TO REUNITE LEBANON. WITHOUT A STRONG NATIONAL ARMY OR SOME EXTERNAL FORCE AT HIS COMMAND, SARKIS IS UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO PREVENT RENEWED FIGHTING.

(C) BASIC PROBLEM REMAINS--HOW CAN A NATION OF TWO MILLION INHABITANTS CONFINED ONE-QUARTER OF ITS POPULATION TO CAMPS AND TREAT THEM AS FOREIGNERS, PARTICULARLY WHEN THESE "FOREIGNERS" ARE HEAVILY ARMED, REVOLUTIONARY IN IDEOLOGY, COMMITTED TO ACTS OF WAR AGAINST ONE OF LEBANON'S NEIGHBORS, AND THE NATURAL ALLIES OF ONE SECTION OF LEBANON'S CAREFULLY BALANCED POLITICAL SYSTEM? GREAT MAJORITY

OF LEBANESE ARE CONVINCED THAT IF "THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM" DID NOT EXIST, THEY COULD WORK OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES, AS THEY HAVE BEFORE. BUT PALESTINIANS, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT LEBANESE, ARE OUTSIDE THIS SYSTEM; AT LEAST HALF THE LEBANESE POPULATION (CHRISTIANS AND MOST SHIA) WILL NOT ACCEPT THEM. UNLESS AND UNTIL PALESTINIANS HAVE SOME PLACE ELSE TO GO, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY PERMANENT PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED IN LEBANON. IT IS NOT LEBANESE PROBLEM  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 07671 02 OF 02 271424Z

THAT IS DELAYING PROGRESS TOWARDS SOLUTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM; IT IS FAILURE TO MAKE PROGRESS ON FUNDAMENTAL ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE, THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE, THAT MAKES PROSPECTS FOR A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO LEBANESE PROBLEM LESS THAN BRIGHT.

6. SARKIS'S BASIC PROBLEM IS TO DEVELOP SOME MOMENTUM TOWARDS PEACE BEFORE OTHER, MILITARILY STRONGER, ACTORS IN THE DRAMA LOSE PATIENCE AND DECIDE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. OVERWHELMING FEELING AMONG LEBANESE IS THAT U.S. MUST PLAY PIVOTAL ROLE IF SARKIS IS TO SUCCEED. FEW HAVE ANY SPECIFIC CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE, BUT THEY ARE HOPING FOR USG'S INITIATIVES IN THREE AREAS:

(1) WORKING WITH MAJOR ARAB COUNTRIES CONCERNED--  
EGYPT, SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA--TO ARRIVE AT MODUS  
VIVENDI SO THAT LEBANON WILL NO LONGER BE COCKPIT  
FOR INTER-ARAB RIVALRY;

(2) PROVIDING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO HELP IN  
REBUILDING LEBANON; AND,

(3) UNDERTAKING NEW INITIATIVE IN OVERALL MIDDLE  
EAST CONTEXT THAT WILL LEAD TOWARDS ESTABLISHMENT  
OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER TO  
PRESIDENT SARKIS ON OCCASION OF HIS INAUGURATION,  
AND DEPARTMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT OF SEPT 23, HAVE  
ENCOURAGED EXPECTATIONS THAT USG IS NOW PREPARED  
TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN TRYING TO CLEAN UP THE MESS  
THAT IS LEBANON TODAY.  
LANE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 27 SEP 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976BEIRUT07671  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760364-0220  
**From:** BEIRUT  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760918/aaaaapbi.tel  
**Line Count:** 294  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 6  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <22 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN LEBANON  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINS, PINT, US, LE, (SARKIS, ELIAS)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006